The public health system operates at federal, provincial, and local levels. In Ontario, at the local level, 34 public health units are responsible for the delivery of provincially mandated public health programs and services.

Two provincial ministries provide direction for local public health programs and services under the Ontario Public Health Standards and serve as key partners for boards of health. The ministries’ responsibilities are as follows:


Another key provincial partner, Public Health Ontario, provides scientific and technical expertise and support for public health programs and services in order to protect and promote the health of Ontarians and reduce inequities in health.

Funding

As of 2020, the majority of public health funding is cost shared at 70 per cent provincial and 30 per cent municipal. Previously, this was 75 per cent provincial and 25 per cent municipal.

In an effort to support Health Units with the transition in funding models during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ministry has provided one-time mitigation funding in each of the years 2020, 2021 and 2022, and has committed to do so for 2023 as well. Mitigation funding is not meant as an ongoing measure, and it is unknown whether the Ministry will continue to extend this funding beyond 2023.

The majority of mandated public health programs (as follows) have provincial cost sharing of up to 70 per cent.

- Health Assessment and Surveillance
- Chronic Diseases and Injuries
- Family Health
- Infectious Diseases
- Environmental Health
- Emergency Preparedness
- Healthy Smiles Ontario
- Smoke Free Ontario

Currently, the Province funds 100 per cent of the following programs:

- Healthy Babies Healthy Children
- Ontario Senior’s Dental Care Program

The provincial government also funds vaccines for immunization programs and drugs for use in the treatment of sexually transmitted diseases, tuberculosis and leprosy.
Boards of health are established in one of three ways:

- **Autonomous**, and established under section 49 of the Health Protection and Promotion Act (HPPA) (e.g. the Eastern Ontario Health Unit)
- **Regional Municipality** (e.g. Regional Municipality of York Act)
- **By city-specific Acts** (e.g. City of Toronto Act)

There are five different kinds of organizational governance models for boards of health across Ontario, which are established in one of the above three ways and described in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Established by</th>
<th>Governance model</th>
<th>Representation</th>
<th>Citizen representative</th>
<th>Provincial appointees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HPPA</td>
<td>Autonomous (22) (e.g. Middlesex-London Health Unit)</td>
<td>Multi-municipal; distinct from municipal organization</td>
<td>Permitted</td>
<td>Permitted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HPPA</td>
<td>Autonomous/integrated (2) (e.g. Chatham-Kent Public Health)</td>
<td>One municipality only; within municipal structure</td>
<td>Permitted</td>
<td>Permitted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional Municipalities Acts</td>
<td>Regional (6) (e.g. Region of Waterloo Public Health)</td>
<td>Councils of regional government</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City-specific Acts</td>
<td>Single-Tier (2) (e.g. City of Hamilton – Public Health and Social Services)</td>
<td>Councils of single-tier municipalities</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City-specific Acts</td>
<td>Semi-Autonomous (2) (e.g. Toronto Board of Health)</td>
<td>Single-tier council appoints members to separate board</td>
<td>Permitted</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The **Region of Waterloo Board of Health** has a Regional governance model, where health unit staff operate under the direction of a medical officer of health and are part of regional government. There are no citizen representatives and no provincial appointees; however, the members are directly elected within the boundaries of Waterloo Region. The Region of Waterloo Board of Health is one of six Regional boards of health in Ontario.

The Region of Waterloo Board of Health is the Council for the Regional Municipality of Waterloo. Regional Council is composed of 16 elected representatives for the municipalities within the Regional boundaries. Recommendations, reports and information are presented to the Board of Health via the Regional government standing committee process. The Community and Health Services Committee is the Committee that deals with Board of Health matters and is a committee composed of all members of Council. Recommendations are forwarded from this committee directly to Council (the Board of Health) for ratification.

The information contained in this fact sheet originates from the Association of Local Public Health Agencies’ **2018 Orientation Manual for Board of Health Members**, and from the Council and Administrative Services Division of Region of Waterloo.

Alternate formats of this document are available upon request.